

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 1686

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CG, AO, SREF, PINS, PGOV, PFOR

SUBJECT: REFUGEES IN ZAIRE

REF: (A) KINSHASA 1625 (B) KINSHASA 1627 (C) KINSHASA 1630

1. ON FEBRUARY 24, POLCOUNS MET WITH BUKASSA, COUNSELOR IN CHARGE OF REFUGEES, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY, TO DISCUSS AGAIN WITH HIM POSSIBILITY OF SENDING EMBASSY OFFICIAL TO DILOLO AREA IN SHABA TO EXAMINE REFUGEE SITUATION. BUKASSA SAID THAT IN PRINCIPLE HE HAD NO OBJECTION BUT WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH MILITARY AUTHORITIES ON THIS MATTER IN VIEW OF SECURITY SITUATION AND POSSIBLE DANGER TO PERSONAL SAFETY. HE PROMISED TO PROVIDE DECISION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

2. BUKASSA THEN TURNED TO RECENT TRIP MADE BY HIS ASSISTANT, KALALA, WITH AID PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER. HE SAID HE HAD READ KALALA'S REPORT AND WAS DISTRESSED TO LEARN THAT UNHCR HAD DONE NOTHING FOR THE REFUGEES IN THE TSHELA REGION. HE LAUNCHED INTO A LONG ATTACK AGAINST LOCAL UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE NOEL, WHOM HE CHARGED WAS CLEARLY BEING DERELICT IN HIS DUTIES. HE EXPRESSED INCOMPREHENSION AT NOEL'S CLAIM THAT REFUGEE SITUATION IN THIS REGION WAS UNDER CONTROL WHILE KALALA'S REPORT (WHICH IS SIMILAR TO OUR OWN) STATED THE OPPOSITE AND THAT MANY WERE STARVING.

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WONDERING HOW NOEL WAS DISBURSING ALL THE FUNDS HE CLAIMED TO HAVE, BUKASSA SUGGESTED SOMEWHAT SARCASTICALLY THEY PRESUMABLY WERE GOING IN TO A PRIVATE SWISS ACCOUNT FOR NOEL. THE FUNDS OBVIOUSLY WERE NOT BEING USED FOR THE REFUGEES, HE SAID.

3. BUKASSA WAS PARTICULARLY INCENSED OVER NOEL'S ALLEGED STATEMENT TO EFFECT THAT CABINDANS WERE NOT ANGOLANS, THUS INTIMATING THE

LATTER WERE NOT WITHIN HIS MANDATE. THIS WAS POLITICAL DECISION, BUKASSA SAID, WHICH NOEL HAD NO BUSINESS GETTING INTO. IN FACT, HE WENT ON, NOEL WAS TOO POLITICAL FOR HIS OWN GOOD AND WAS CONCERNING HIMSELF WITH MATTERS THAT WERE MORE PROPERLY SOLELY WITHIN THE PURVIEW OF THE GOZ AND THE PRA. IN THIS CONNECTION, BUKASSA WAS AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN NOEL'S INSISTENCE ON REPATRIATION WHEN THE PRA ITSELF HAS APPEARED TO BE SOMEWHAT RELUCTANT IN PUSHING THE RETURN OF REFUGEES FROM ZAIRE.

4. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, BUKASSA SAID HE HAD HAD ONLY SPORADIC DEALINGS WITH NOEL. THE LATTER SEEMED MORE DISPOSED TO WORK WITH SOMEONE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS, ALTHOUGH BUKASSA CHAIRED THE ZAIRIAN REFUGEE COMMITTEE. IN ADDITION, BUKASSA SAID THAT NOEL'S STANDARD ANSWER REGARDING THE REFUGEE SITUATION WAS THAT "EVERYTHING WAS UNDER CONTROL". CLEARLY, HE SAID THIS WAS NOT THE CASE IN THE TSHELA REGION. ALSO, HE NOTED THAT NOEL NEVER SHOWED HIM THE UNHCR REPORTS ON THE SITUATION BUT MERELY GAVE HIM GENERALIZED ORAL REPORTS.

5. BUKASSA THEN SAID THAT NOEL HAD INTIMATED TO HIM THE POSSIBILITY OF US SKULLDUGGERY WITH RESPECT TO THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. NOEL REPORTEDLY POINTEDLY QUESTIONED REASONS BEHIND THE US DESIRE TO INVESTIGATE SITUATION FOR ITSELF AND SUGGESTED THAT IRC PHOTOS OF HUNGRY CHILDREN WOULD SOON FIND THEIR WAY IN AMERICAN PRESS. BUKASSA TOLD POLCOUNS THAT HE HAD REBUTTED THESE ALLEGATIONS. HE MADE IT CLEAR, HE SAID, THAT US WAS ONLY CONCERNED ABOUT HUMANITARIAN PLIGHT OF REFUGEES AND HE HAD PERSONALLY GRANTED PERMISSION FOR FIELD TRIP IN COMPANY OF HIS ASSISTANT. GOZ, HE SAID, WAS THEREFORE WELL AWARE OF US INTENTIONS.

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6. COMMENT: IN PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS, BUKASSA HAS EXPRESSED UNHAPPINESS WITH UNHCR PERFORMANCE IN ZAIRE. THIS LATEST OUTBURST IS THE STRONGEST HE HAS HAD EVER MADE AGAINST NOEL. HE APPEARS TO BE WILLING TO INSURE THAT THE DEFICIENCIES IN UNHCR RELIEF ASSISTANCE BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF HIGHER AUTHORITIES. HOWEVER, WE ARE UNCERTAIN AS TO HIS EFFECTIVENESS. THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENCY HAS JUST BEEN RESTRUCTURED. NOT ONLY HAS ITS LONG-TIME DIRECTOR, BISENGIMANA, BEEN REMOVED, BUT MANY OF THE COUNSELORS (17 IN ALL) ARE EXPECTED TO BE DROPPED. THUS, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BUKASSA MAY BE AMONG THOSE TO GET THE AXE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE LOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR REFUGEES MAY SHIFT IN THE WAKE OF THIS RESHUFFLE AT THE PRESIDENCY AND IN THE GOVERNMENT (REF. C). AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, BUKASSA IS STILL IN CHARGE OF REFUGEES AND IT WOULD APPEAR THAT HE WILL MAKE THE FOREGOING VIEWS KNOWN TO HIS SUPERIORS. WE WILL, OF COURSE, FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS CLOSELY AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AS IT BECOMES AVAILABLE.

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